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BRAZILIAN TV AND CULTURE

COMM 465 – Fall 2007

Course Description:

This course analyzes the dynamic interactions between television and culture in Brazil. We start by looking at some of the available theoretical perspectives on culture and society and then focus on the contributions emerging from the field of cultural studies. Based on these approaches, we look at television as one of the central institutions that mediate the constitution of hegemonic values and meanings in Brazilian society. After a brief introduction to Brazilian culture and its roots, the course identifies the main features of the television industry, of the dominant media company (TV Globo) and of the most popular programs (*telenovelas*). Special emphasis will be given to the role of television in shaping gender, ethnic, class, religious, and political identities in Brazil. The course concludes with a discussion of contemporary issues, including the role of television in the mediation of social inequality and violence in Brazilian society.

Course Text:

- Joseph Page, *The Brazilians*. Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995.
The book will be available through Tulane Bookstore.

Blackboard:

Blackboard will be used for posting announcements, assignments, and other information. It will also be used for online discussions. The system can be accessed at <<http://mytulane.blackboard.com/>>. If you have problems using the system, you can call the help desk: 862.8888.

Required texts:

Besides the textbook, we will work with several articles and book chapters which will be available online at Blackboard. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the classes for which they are listed in the syllabus. All students should have hard copies of the texts and bring them to the respective sessions. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade.

Attendance:

Regular attendance is required and attendance will be taken in every class meeting. You can miss three class sessions without penalty in your participation grade. Seven absences will result in notification of the Dean's office. Unexcused absences after notification will result in the final grade recommendation of a "WF" to the Dean.

Evaluation:

Your final evaluation will be based on the following:

1) Midterm exam: Students will take an in-class midterm exam which covers parts I and II of the course. A list of possible questions will be delivered to students in advance and two of the questions will be chosen by the instructor to be included in the exam. The midterm is a closed book exam. Students should bring a pen and a blank blue book on the scheduled date for the exam;

2) Final paper: Students will be required to write a 10-12 pages paper. Specific guidelines for the paper will be given later;

3) Participation: It is very important that students complete all the assigned readings before each session. The course will adopt a seminar format, meaning that I expect students to participate in class discussions. You should be prepared to engage with the main arguments of the readings in class. Attendance will also be considered when assessing participation;

4) In-class presentation: Students will be required to form groups with two members, which will be in charge of preparing a 15 minutes long presentation of a designated topic. The list of topics will be decided later;

5) Readings summaries: Students should bring a one-page summary of the reading/s assigned for each session. Summaries should include the author/s' main arguments and will be due in the beginning of class. Summaries can be typed or hand-written, and should include the student's full name and the date of the session. Summaries will be graded as "sufficient" and "insufficient" and only the former will satisfy the requirement. If you deliver all summaries and they are graded "sufficient," you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade. If you do not, your grade will be proportionally lowered down to a possible "F" (50 points);

6) Discussion board: Students will be evaluated for their participation in the "Discussion Board" area of Blackboard. This is where our online discussions will take place. There will be one forum for each part of the course. Students should use the online board to engage with issues related to the readings or class discussions. There are no major restrictions on the postings, but students should be cordial and respectful when discussing classmates' arguments. Failure to do so will disqualify the respective postings and may result in other penalties.

How to post to a discussion board: 1) click on the discussion board button; 2) click on the respective "forum" (Part I, II, etc.); 3) click on "thread" to start a new topic of discussion, with a new subject title; or respond to an existing thread by clicking on its title.

You will be expected to post at least one message (an original thread or a response to a classmate's posting) in each of the 11 designated weeks for online discussions (listed below). Of the 11 required messages, 4 of them need to be original threads. Whether you post more than these 11 messages is entirely up to you. As long as you complete the 11 minimum posts (four threads and seven messages in all designated weeks) with serious and thoughtful contributions, you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade. If you do not post all required messages, your grade will be proportionally lowered down to a possible "F" (50 points).

Designated weeks for online discussions - Week 1: Sep 10-16; Week 2: Sep 17-23; Week 3: Sep 24-30; Week 4: Oct 1-7; Week 5: Oct 8-14; Week 6: Oct 15-21; Week 7: Oct 22-28; Week 8: Oct 29-Nov 4; Week 9: Nov 5-11; Week 10: Nov 12-18; Week 11: Nov 26-Dec 2.

Your final grade will be calculated in the following manner:

Midterm Exam	25 %	Participation	15 %	Group Presentation:	15 %
Final paper	25 %	Discussion board:	10 %	Readings summaries:	10 %

Grading scale:

A	94.0 to 100.0	B	84.0 to 86.9	C	74.0 to 76.9	D	64.0 to 66.9
A-	90.0 to 93.9	B-	80.0 to 83.9	C-	70.0 to 73.9	D-	60.0 to 63.9
B+	87.0 to 89.9	C+	77.0 to 79.9	D+	67.0 to 69.9	F	00.0 to 59.9

Academic dishonesty:

Remember that plagiarism is a form of cheating. Do not present someone else's ideas as yours, without citing the source. Buying or finding papers on similar topics of the course in the Internet is a form of plagiarism. Also remember that turning in the same paper for credit in two courses is a violation of scholarly ethics. This course adheres strictly to the Tulane Honor Code, available at: < <http://college.tulane.edu/code.pdf> >.

Course Schedule:

Aug 30 – Introduction to the procedures and contents of the course

PART I
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES
ON CULTURE, MEDIA, AND SOCIETY.

Sep 4 – Cultural theories

* Wendy Griswold, *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1994, pp. 1-38.

Sep 6 – No class. Read the text: Stuart Hall, “Gramsci’s relevance for the study of race and ethnicity”. In David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 411-440.

Sep 11 – Williams’ materialist cultural theory

* Raymond Williams, “Selections from *Marxism and Literature*,” in N. Dirks, G. Eley and S. Ortner (eds.), *Culture/Power/History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 585-608.

Sep 13 – Tradition, modernization, and cultural hybridism

* Néstor Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995 (“Entrance,” pp. 1-11; chapter 2, pp. 41-65).

Sep 18 – Media, hegemony, and cultural mediations

* Jesús Martín-Barbero, *Communication, Culture and Hegemony*. London: Sage, 1993 (chapter 4, pp. 62-83; and pp. 203-240)

PART II
INTRODUCTION TO BRAZILIAN TV AND CULTURE:
HISTORICAL ROOTS AND NATIONAL OBSESSIONS

Sep 20 – Roots: The Portuguese and the Africans

* Page, chapters 1 and 2, pp. 35-84.

Sep 25 – Roots: Indians and immigrants

* Page, chapters 3 and 4, pp. 85-117.

Sep 27 – Roots: Religious identities in Brazil

* Page, chapters 13, 14 and 15, pp. 321-383.

Oct 2 – National obsessions: television and telenovelas

* Page, chapter 6, pp. 154-176, and chapter 18, pp. 444-465.

Oct 4 – National obsessions: Soccer and Carnival

* Page, chapter 16, pp. 387-411, and chapter 19, pp. 466-485.

Oct 9 – MIDTERM EXAM

PART III
TELEVISION, CULTURAL CHANGE, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY:
FROM THE DICTATORSHIP TO THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

To be scheduled – Screening of the film “Bye Bye Brazil”

Oct 11 – TV’s cultural impact: the question of acculturation

* Richard Pace, “First-time televiewing in Amazônia: television acculturation in Gurupá, Brazil.” *Ethnology*, Vol. 32, n. 2, 1993, pp. 187-205.

Oct 16 – TV’s cultural impact: the question of acculturation (cont.)

* Raul Reis, “The impact of television in the Brazilian Amazon.” *Human Organization*, Vol. 57, n. 3, 1998, pp. 300-306.

* Randal Johnson, “Film, television and traditional folk culture in *Bye Bye Brasil*.” *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 18, n. 1, 1984, pp. 121-132.

Oct 18 – Telenovelas and political opening

* Joseph Straubhaar, “The reflection of the Brazilian political opening in the telenovela [soap opera], 1974-1985,” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, Vol. 7, 1988, pp. 59-76.

Oct 23 – Telenovelas and the new democracy

* Randal Johnson, “Deus e o diabo na terra da Globo: [God and the devil in the land of Globo]: Roque Santeiro and Brazil’s ‘New’ Republic,” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, Vol. 7, 1988, pp. 77-88.

PART IV
TELEVISION REPRESENTATIONS
OF POLITICS, GENDER, AND RACE

Oct 25 – Telenovela representations of immigrant identities

* Mauro Porto, “Political controversies in Brazilian TV fiction: Viewer's interpretations of the telenovela Terra Nostra”. *Television and New Media*, Vol. 6, n. 4, 2005, pp. 342-359.

Oct 30 – Television, gender, and class: the case of Xuxa

* Amelia Simpson, *Xuxa: The Mega-Marketing of Gender, Race, and Modernity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993 (Introduction, pp. 1-11; chapter 2, pp. 49-95).

Nov 1 – Telenovela representations of gays and lesbians

* Rousiley Maia and Angela Marques, “Media reflexivity and the struggle for recognition: groups of despised sexuality in Brazilian soap operas,” *Inter Sections*, Vol. 2, n. 3/4, 2002, pp. 59-68.

* Antonio La Pastina, “The sexual order in Brazilian television: public and institutional reception of sexual difference,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 5, n. 1, 2002, pp. 83-99.

To be scheduled – Documentary screening: *Denying Brazil*

Nov 6 – Telenovela representations of Afro-Brazilians

* Denise Ferreira da Silva, “The drama of modernity: color and symbolic exclusion in the Brazilian telenovela,” in L. Crook and R. Johnson (eds.), *Black Brazil*. Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1999, pp. 339-361.

Nov 8 - Telenovelas and civil society: the Landless Movement

* Esther Hamburger, “Politics and intimacy: the agrarian reform in a Brazilian telenovela,” *Television and New Media*, Vol. 1, n. 2, 2000, pp. 159-178.

PART V
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES: SOCIAL INEQUALITY,
VIOLENCE, AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

Nov 13 – Social inequality in Brazil

* Page, chap. 5, pp. 121-153, and chap. 7, pp. 177-200.

To be scheduled - Documentary screening: *Bus 174*

Nov 15 – TV and violence in Brazil

* Page, chapters 9 and 10, pp. 229-275.

Nov 20 - Documentary screening: *Televangelism in Brazil*.

Nov 22 – No class. Thanksgiving holiday.

Nov 27 - Television and shifting religious identities

* Patricia Birman and David Lehmann, "Religion and the media in a battle for ideological hegemony: the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and TV Globo in Brazil". *Bulletin of Latin American Research*. Vol. 18, n. 2, 1999, pp 145-164.

Nov 29 – Conclusions. Course evaluation. FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS.

Dec 4 and 6 – No class.